

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 VO-01 SCA-01 PPT-01 CPR-01 L-02 PRS-01

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P 031430Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0610

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 1275

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CVIS, CPAS, LY

SUBJ: PASSPORT PROBLEM

REF: STATE 187972

1. UNDERSTAND THAT ACTIVE CONSIDERATION NOW BEING GIVEN TO STARTING USE ARABIC IN SOME U.S. PASSPORTS -- SO OFFER SOME THOUGHTS ON HOW THIS MAY BE DONE, AS SUGGESTED BY REFTEL PARA 5.

2. FIRST, WE HAVE NO SURE WAY OF GAUGING LIKELIHOOD OF LARG ACCEPTANCE OF ANY PARTICULAR MODE OF USING ARABIC. FACT IS THAT, SINCE MAY, LARG HAS ACCEPTED WIDE VARIETY OF MODES SO LONG AS THEY PROVIDE A PEG FOR MFA TO SAY THAT THE OTHER COUNTRY "HAS ACCEPTED ARABIC". THIS SUGGESTS THAT IF OUR AIM IS TO START OBTAINING ENTRY FOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS, THE IMPORTANT THING TO CONVEY IS THAT WE TOO ARE "ACCEPTING ARABIC". IT IS NOT LIKELY TO BE HELPFUL IF WE GET PRECISE AND SPELL OUT OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO DO SO, ACTUALLY, EXCEPT IN A VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF CASES. WHY DON'T WE JUST TELL THE LARG, WHEN AND AS NECESSARY, NOT WHAT IS PROPOSED PARA 3 REFTEL, BUT: "YES, WE ARE NOW ACCEPTING THE USE OF
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ARABIC WHEN NECESSARY." PERIOD. THIS LEAVES ALL OUR

OPTIONS OPEN IN CASE WE HAVE TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS DOWN THIS ROAD, WHICH IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT IN OUR JUDGMENT LIKELY. IT IS WITHIN THE LARG'S POWER TO REINTERPRET AND REINFORCE ITS PASSPORT RESTRICTIONS AGAIN -- NOTABLY IN TWO WAYS, A) BY SETTING A DEADLINE FOR PRESENTING PASSPORTS PRINTED AND COMPLETED IN ARABIC, AND B) BY ONCE AGAIN ABOLISHING THE CATEGORIES OF TRAVELERS EXEMPTED FROM PRESENTING PASSPORTS IN ARABIC.

3. THE MESSAGE SUGGESTED ABOVE OF COURSE RAISES THE

PROBLEM OF UNDER EXPECTATIONS FROM NON-OFFICIAL AMERICANS WHO HEAR ANY LARG ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WE HEVER ACCEPTED ARABIC. BUT BELIEVE THIS PROBLEM IS PREFER- ABLE TO THE ALTERNATE PROBLEM OF GETTING INTO A HASSLE WITH LARG AS TO HOW AND HOW EXTENSIVELY WE ACTUALLY USE ARABIC. FOR THE RESIDENT COMMUNITY WE COULD QUIETLY PASS THE WORD NOT TO EXPECT ANYTHING IN THEIR PASSPORTS. ASSUME DEPT COULD DO THE SAME ON A CASE- BY CASE BASIS RATHER THAN WITH A PRESS STATEMENT

ATTRACTING LARG ATTENTION.

4. INCIDENTALLY, AND FOR THE RECORD, CONTRARY TO WHAT I WAS TOLD BY MR. ATTIGA OF MFA ON AUGUST 30, LARG PASSPORTS CONTINUE TO BE ISSUED HERE AS BEFORE AND ARE NOT BEING COMPLETED IN ENGLISH AS WELL AS ARABIC. NOR HAS THERE BEEN ANY CIRCULAR NOTE FROM MFA SAYING THEY WOULD BE.

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